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AUTHOR	Polakow-Suransky, Sasha S.
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ABSTRACT

The issue of history, specifically history textbooks, has been at the center of South Africa's educational reform debates for years. One of the consequences of South Africa's delayed curricular reform is the continued use of apartheid-era history textbooks, which, among other things, deny European colonization and conquest and claim that whites and blacks arrived in uninhabited South Africa simultaneously. This study comparatively analyzes the content of old and new South African textbooks, emphasizing master symbols, number of pages devoted to certain historical events, and ideological implications of asserted facts. It also includes interviews with teachers at an all-white Afrikaans-language school, private and public integrated schools, and two public all-black schools. Students, professors, publishers, government officials, and journalists are also consulted. This paper explains that new textbooks have attempted to challenge the old apartheid narratives, highlighting migrations of blacks as well as whites. The most significant difference is in the treatment of separate development policy. Very little within these new history texts is written in Afrikaans. Though these new texts are a dramatic step forward, they are not available in many schools nationwide, highlighting the necessity of a more fundamental change in the curriculum. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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Historical Amnesia?
The Politics of Textbooks in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Sasha S. Polakow-Suransky
Brown University

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Historical Background

Following South Africa's transition to majority rule in 1994, the ANC-led government vowed to overhaul the apartheid-era education system, a pillar of the old white supremacist order. Yet despite seven years of white papers, policy proposals, and most recently the national educational blueprint "Curriculum 2005" this comprehensive restructuring has not yet come to fruition. The issue of history, specifically history textbooks, has been at the center of the educational reform debate for over a decade, when the first genuine plans to reform the "bantu education" system began to circulate. South African Constitutional Court Justice Albie Sachs recalls that as early as the 1980s as the true beginning of the debate surrounding post-liberation history (Sachs, 2002). Indeed it was then, when most of the African National Congress (ANC) leadership was languishing in prison, that the ANC in exile began establishing schools in Tanzania and other African nations to train its members.

Though many analysts (Rostron, 1999; Bam, 2000; Sieborger, 2001) contextualize the debate primarily within the landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, the debate over what role history would play in a free South Africa had already become heated in exile circles abroad. The questions raised then—whether to create a synthesized account of the past or to counter apartheid history with African nationalist narratives—are not so different to those being asked today. Though there exists a broad consensus that history as taught under the apartheid regime must be abolished, the debate rages on over what role and how significant a role history will play in post-apartheid South Africa's curriculum.

One of the consequences of delayed curricular reform has been the continued use of apartheid-era history textbooks, which, among other things, deny European colonization and conquest and claim that whites and blacks arrived in uninhabited South Africa at the same time (Rostron, 1999, p.1). This thesis, the foundational fallacy of apartheid historiography and the theoretical cornerstone of white supremacy, continues to find its way into some of the most impoverished classrooms in South Africa. By the late 1990s, the delayed implementation of a new curriculum began to raise eyebrows and government officials reflexively attributed the problem to a lack of funding.

However, other analysts saw a deeper political crisis. Some argued that the failure to write and distribute new textbooks is a conscious effort on the part of the government

to defuse tension and reduce conflict. As the *New Statesman* has argued: "The viciousness of the apartheid regime is being played down in favour of a story about "the triumph of the human spirit. This gloss allows South African whites, even those who supported apartheid, to bask in that glow of triumph"(Rostron, 1999, p. 2). The ANC government has also supported a conciliatory revisionist narrative for the centennial commemorations of the Boer War, in which Afrikaners and Blacks are depicted as equal victims at the hands of British imperialism. Yet this obscures the fact that most Blacks fought with the British against the Afrikaners because they viewed the British as far less oppressive, according to Jabu Maphalala, a history professor at the University of Zululand (Vergnani, 2000). Indeed, Maphalala argues, accepting the government's cozy centennial narrative is dangerous: "'If we get into that kind of propaganda, then we cease to be historians and become politicians.'"

All of this took place against the backdrop of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as well as rapid and drastic changes in the national curriculum. Then minister of education Sibusiso Bengu called for alterations to school syllabi and soon afterward a process of across-the-board curricular reform was set in motion; it was known as Curriculum 2005. The result was a broad commitment to outcomes-based education as well as efficient market driven curricula. With unemployment in excess of 30 percent, the demand for marketable skills was a primary concern and quickly became a death knell for history. Among other things, history was collapsed into a broader category of social sciences and geography, diluting the subject significantly and stripping it of its traditional content-driven approach. Instead the curriculum called for mastery of geographic basics and an understanding of basic historical facts without any critical analysis of South Africa's multi-layered historical narratives let alone the roots of the apartheid social order. As James Campbell of Brown University points out: "You had a paradoxical situation, where a society that was going through a very public ritual about confronting the past was simultaneously abolishing history instruction in its classrooms." (Campbell, 2002)

June Bam of the University of Stellenbosch was harsher in her criticism. Bam berated the government for its "suppression of historical consciousness" in the schools and cautioned the new government not to marginalize historical consciousness in its effort to create a modernized curriculum designed to prepare students for the global economy (Bam, 2000, p. 6). To Bam,

"historical understanding remains undoubtedly important and relevant for Africans in asserting themselves in the new global order…Understanding the very symptoms of post-modernist amnesia, is in itself timeless" (p. 7). Moreover, Bam insisted that the presence of a national Truth and Reconciliation commission did not eclipse the need for history in the schools, pointing out the narrow historical and investigative mandate of the TRC, which covered only the period 1960-1993 and did not discuss the historical processes leading to apartheid-era human rights violations whatsoever. As valuable as it was, Bam argues that "One example that illustrates the narrowness of its 'investigative mandate' is its limitation to historical understanding of apartheid as a consequence of racism rather than any other process, such as capitalism and its historical roots in slave society, colonialism and industrialization" (p. 5).

In an ironic twist, all of this has now changed. Bam, once the outspoken critic of government policy during the tenure of Sibusiso Bengu, is now a high-level government official, having been appointed by the new education Minister, Kader Asmal, to head up the South African History Project. This dramatic ideological shift occurred after the publication of a 2000 Report by the History/Archaeology Panel, a body established by Minister Asmal, which consisted of eminent historians, archaeologists, and educational professionals. The panel's charge was to analyze the quality of history teaching and recommend reforms for the strengthening of the history curriculum. The panel found that "the cumulative effect of relevant government policy, whether consciously or unconsciously, has been to de-emphasize history not only in schooling but also in tertiary sectors. The recent introduction of Curriculum 2005 has brought positive features in the combating of outmoded methods of rote-learning…But it has also brought serious costs and constraints. History and a limited level of archaeology are dissolved in disciplinary terms and inserted into a general Human and Social Sciences learning area" (Report of the History/Archaeology Panel, 2000, p. 4). The panel went on to conclude that history teachers had been rendered superfluous in many schools while the subject came to be regarded as a refuge for less-able students failing in the favored mathematical and scientific disciplines. Adamant that this trend needed to be reversed, the panel insisted that " promoting a strong study of the past is a particular educational imperative in a country like South Africa, which is itself consciously remaking its current history. In conditions of flux, historical study of a probing kind is a vital aid against amnesia, and a warning against any triumphalism of the present" (Report of the History/Archaeology Panel, 2000, p. 1).

Sources and Methodology

This research was carried out in South Africa during the summer of 2001. The project was based at the University of Pretoria (UP) under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Jansen, Dean of the Faculty of Education at UP, and Dr. Johan Beckmann, Executive Director of the UP-affiliated Interuniversity Centre for Education Law and Policy (CELP). The research focuses on the greater Johannesburg/Pretoria metropolitan area with comparative analysis of poor townships on the outskirts of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province. This project relied heavily on qualitative research.

The study hinged primarily on a comparative analysis of the content of old and new textbooks, with specific attention given to "master symbols," the number of pages devoted to certain historical events, and the ideological implications of asserted "facts." In addition, numerous 30-60 minute interviews were conducted with teachers at five different schools, including one all-white Afrikaans-language school, a private integrated school, a public integrated school, and two public all-black schools. Students, professors, publishers, government officials, and journalists were also consulted. These interviews were thematically coded and analyzed in order to determine dominant trends in responses. Due to the controversial nature of the project, and the widely divergent views held by different parties involved, my conclusions represent a synthesis of the varying views. Finally, the input of academics (in both history and education departments) as well as scholarly criticism of new and apartheid-era narratives was sought in order to provide important insights into the teaching of history, its de-emphasis in schools and demotion in the academic hierarchy, and the future of curriculum reform in South Africa.

Theoretical Context

Virtually every nation has had its own controversy surrounding the content of its textbooks. From Japan to the United States, from Germany to Chile what is included and what is excluded from classrooms and texts has animated heated public debates. Whether the result of minority group grievances or portrayals of a nation's brutal past, these debates have come to define what is taught to school-age children and in so doing these texts have played no small role in creating modern national identities. The most recent example graced the front page of the

Washington Post just last week: after years of using US-supplied cold-war era textbooks which encouraged jihad against the Soviet Union, Afghan educators and American aid workers are struggling to erase—literally—these violent images of the past. Educational workers are scratching out pictures of land-mines and Kalashnikovs which fill the pages of math textbooks teaching children to count (Stephens and Ottoway, 2002, p. A1). Similarly, there is controversy regarding the explicit fundamentalist religious content of books teaching history by inciting pupils to resist foreign invaders.

As Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith have argued "…texts are not simply 'delivery systems' of 'facts.' They are at once the result of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises. They are conceived, designed, and authored by people with real interests. They are published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources, and power" (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 3). While Afghanistan is currently in the public spotlight, these observations hold true elsewhere as well. The South African situation, deemed by many to be resolved as a result of the truth and reconciliation commission is in fact still in a tumultuous period of transition. As Bam notes above, the TRC failed to provide a structural and historical context for the testimony presented to it, and thus it remains an incomplete narrative, stripped of its place in the larger mosaic of Southern African history. It is for this reason that the place of history teaching in the new South Africa is so vital.

Apple and Christian-Smith claim that "Texts are really messages to and about the future. As part of a curriculum, they participate in no less than the organized knowledge system of society. They participate in creating what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful. They help set the canons of truthfulness and, as such, also help re-create a major reference point for what knowledge, culture, belief, and morality really *are*." (p. 4) And if they are correct, South Africa has reached a crucial crossroads. In nascent democracies still experiencing a period of rapid cultural flux and re-identification, the role of history is central to the formation of a new national identity. In such situations, Apple and Christian-Smith continue, "the role of education takes on even more importance, since new knowledge, new ethics, and a new reality seek to replace the old…Here the politics of the text takes on special importance, because the textbook often represents an overt attempt to help create a new cultural reality" (p. 11).

The immediate post-apartheid regime downplayed the importance of history in the new curriculum. Many regarded this move as primarily a verdict of disgust on the old curriculum.

University of Cape Town professor Rob Sieborger, a leading advocate of revitalizing history in the schools, explains that years of propagandist history mandated by the apartheid government led many to disdain the subject. When the ANC government took power in 1994, the sentiment that it was "better not to have history at all than to have that kind of history again" was prevalent according to Sieborger (2001). But to some this approach was tantamount to "throwing the baby out with the bath water" (Bam, 2000, p. 3).

Why then is history so vital in the rebuilding of formerly authoritarian societies? British historical philosopher John Tosh (2000) points to the systematic methods that define the discipline. In his view "History as a disciplined enquiry aims to sustain the widest possible definition of memory, and to make the process of recall as accurate as possible, so that our knowledge of the past is not confined to what is immediately relevant" (p. 2). History also becomes an antidote to nationalistic narratives that have distorted the past. In the South African case, Afrikaner nationalism became the defining characteristic of history texts and the heroic struggle and survival of the white Afrikaner nation formed the bulk of the South African history curriculum following the Nationalist Party's accession to power in 1948 (the formal beginning of apartheid).

To Tosh, this sort of "Essentialism…produces a powerful sense of exclusive identity, but it makes bad history. Not only is everything in the past that contradicts the required self-image suppressed; the interval between 'then' and 'now' is telescoped by the assertion of an unchanging identity, impervious to the play of historical circumstance" (p. 11). The role of history, then, is to resist such unified and simplistic narratives by seeking to view a composite picture rather than a unitary and self-absorbed narrative that is bound up with one's own identity. Tosh goes on to argue, "Historical *difference* lies at the heart of the discipline's claim to be socially relevant. As a memory-bank of what is unfamiliar or alien, history constitutes our most important cultural resource. It offers a means-imperfect but indispensable-of entering into the kind of experience that is simply not possible in our own lives" (Tosh, pp. 19-20).

In his attack on conventional narratives of supposedly "objective" history, Michel Foucault presents perhaps the most cogent theoretical explanation of history's function within a curriculum-or, for that matter, any epistemological framework. "History becomes 'effective' to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. 'Effective history'

deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending." (Bouchard (ed.), 1977, p. 154)

This form of knowledge, alternately termed "collective critical consciousness" by Henry Giroux (1997, p. 5) can also act as a reservoir of critical inquiry within increasingly barren market-driven curricula, which encourage a purely technocratic consciousness devoid of the structural analysis and critical consciousness that the study of history could provide. June Bam points to as late as 1998 as a point when the official government platform seemed to endorse such a positivist, technocratic curriculum. Bam derides the period as an instance of "historical amnesia" (Bam, 2000, pp. 4-5). Now the tables have turned and the critics are in the driver's seat. But how much have the texts and, more importantly, history's place in the curriculum changed?

Textbook Analysis

Richard Chernis' Ph.D dissertation at the Univerity of Pretoria, "The Past in the Service of the Present: A study of South African History Syllabuses and Textbooks 1839-1990," provides the most in-depth analysis of bias in South African history curricula. As Chernis (1990) notes, explicit pro-British bias was prevalent long before the advent of Afrikaner nationalism, and indeed the Afrikaner nationalist narrative can in may ways be seen as a reaction to forced Anglicization policies and the imposition of British educational norms following the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902. After the establishment of the apartheid state in 1948, Afrikaners rewrote this history with themselves as the central protagonists. Chernis describes the primary functions of these apartheid era texts as: identity formation, legitimation [of the current social order], and national orientation. Through the use of "master symbols" the text manages to create an implicit "other." As Chernis notes "A nation's self image, portrayed as flatteringly as possible in its history textbooks, is to a large extent defined by the manner in which it views others. It is almost as if the self-image is enhanced by the coexistence of hostile images of those deemed outside the group" (p. 59). Thus, symbols and stereotypes play a central role in creating consciousness of the social hierarchy among children. He continues: "Master symbols become so much a part of a society's collective consciousness that they are eventually regarded as irrefutable facts" (p. 55).

As one of the few government-approved texts during the apartheid era, C.J. Joubert's work was a fixture in most South African classrooms, whether English or Afrikaans. The *History*

for Standard 6 (1975) version covers European and South African history through 1854. The text devotes only one-third of its 156 pages to South African history. Of these 48 pages, half are devoted to the great trek and white settlement, confirming the eminent anti-apartheid Afrikaner historian Charles Van Onselen's claim that "The teaching of history at school has long been infected with the Great Trek Virus…So powerful was GTV, and so conscientiously was it spread through the schools by our erstwhile Christian Nationalist masters, that it destroyed generations of would-be historians" (Pretorius, 2001). Joubert's use of master symbols and counter-symbols is simple but nonetheless clear: "Pretorius immediately made a favorable impression on the other Trekkers. On 25 November he was elected commandant-general of the Punitive Commando. He now finalized the preparations for a second campaign against [Zulu King] Dingane…It was by means of this campaign that Pretorius was able to save the Great Trek and to secure Natal for White settlement" (p. 144).

The section devoted to black history devotes itself to advancing the thesis that black South Africans are not actually from Southern Africa, thereby legitimating the white presence. Joubert writes: "The real origin of the Black tribes of Southern Africa cannot be determined with certainty," but concludes that they must have come from the lake regions of Central Africa. (p. 108) Joubert continues by detailing the southward migration of black South Africans, establishing that "In 1686 the forefront of the group, namely the Xhosa, had reached the Kei River." Despite overwhelming historical and archaeological evidence to the contrary, Joubert has strategically traced the origin of black South Africans to a point *after* the 1654 arrival of Dutch settlers at the Cape thereby further legitimizing the colonial presence.

Joubert's *History for Standard 10*, designed for matriculating seniors, treats the apartheid policy of separate development—designed to achieve complete racial segregation by creating separate "black states" (also known as Bantustans or homelands) in outlying rural areas of South Africa—in great detail. Viewed by outside nations as a sham to disenfranchise blacks officially while systematically purging them from urban areas, Joubert explains the policy in a detached manner: "the Blacks no longer had any political rights in 'White' South Africa. Similarly, the Whites do not have any political rights in a Black state" (p. 250). Joubert goes on to describe its goals in a revealing manner that makes clear the white fears underlying the policy: "If all the different population groups of South Africa were included in one system, one or more groups would inevitably dominate the others…The established nationhood of the Whites has to be

protected and maintained in that part of the country that has *always* [emphasis added] been theirs" (p. 247). As ideologically loaded as the statement may seem, coming on the heels of the Standard 6 text cited above, the average white South African child of the era most likely found the policy quite fair. Chernis characterizes the nearly universal Joubert text as "anti-knowledge," as it functions largely as a tool to legitimize the existing social order as well as to proliferate the Afrikaner nationalist mythology (p. 338).

Another text of that era, *Timelines 7*, describes the political relationship between South Africa and one of these "independent Black states," the Transkei. "The independence of Transkei is not recognized by the rest of the world and therefore the country is not a member of the U.N.O. or the O.A.U. Her foreign relations are limited to South Africa and other homelands in Southern Africa" (Lintvelt, Van Niekerk, and Van Wyk, 1985, p. 103). This seemingly detached but ideologically loaded statement at once defines the apartheid creation Transkei as a "country" and attempts no critical discussion of why this "country" is not recognized by the rest of the world.

New texts have attempted to challenge the old apartheid narratives. These texts devote significantly less attention to the great trek and focus instead on migrations of black people as well. The most striking difference is in the treatment of separate development policy. The new text, *Making History Standard 10/Grade 12*, published by Heinemann and authored by a diverse group, effectively deconstructs the rhetoric of separate development that was advanced by the South African government of the 1960s and 1970s and reinforced in the Joubert texts. The authors write: "...the division of the territory was designed to enable whites to keep control of the major urban areas, the most fertile farming land, most of the major mines, and the sites of industrial production. While black homelands had political control over territory, they had little access to the real wealth of the country. Even access to urban employment for people living in the homelands was restricted by influx control" (p. 338). The authors go on to discuss the government's motive of attempting to appease the international community by "granting independence" to blacks in the form of Bantustans. Furthermore, it contends that "In order to enforce the homelands policy, the government carried out an extensive campaign of forced removals in the 1960s and 1970s. Millions of people were moved, usually by the police or the army..." (p. 339).

In contrast to the old texts mentioned above, another new book, *Looking into the Past Grade 12,* describes the separate development era and accompanying "Group Areas Act" as a law that "broke up entire communities and led to large scale forced removals…further restricted the mobility of Africans and led to many cases of extreme hardship. Bantu education impoverished generations of African children. The total impact was sufficient for the international community to call apartheid a crime against humanity" (p. 317).

The new texts, flawed as they may be in parts are a dramatic step forward from the Joubert era. But unfortunately they are not available in many schools throughout the country, highlighting the necessity of a more fundamental change in the curriculum. The 2000 History and Archaeology panel insisted on restoring history to a prominent place in the academic hierarchy because it achieves the following objectives: History encourages civic responsibility and theoretical thinking, contextualizes issues and provokes debate, fosters discriminating judgment, is important to the construction of identity, and "enables us to listen to formerly subjugated voices and to redress the invisibility of the formerly marginalized" (p. 6). As many teachers attest, rewriting the textbooks is only half the battle; making sure that students actually have an opportunity read them is another story altogether.

Teacher Narratives[1]

Marianne, a teacher at an elite Afrikaans-language school in the shadows of the University of Pretoria, is considered among the most progressive history teachers in the Afrikaans schools. Here, at an institution that was founded as a show of resistance against early 20th century English language instruction policies imposed by the British following their victory in the Anglo-Boer War, the Afrikaner nationalist narrative does not die easily. "You get very big problems in this school," says Marianne. And recent history only complicates the situation further: "it is very difficult to teach [the apartheid] period. They're afraid. Parents call and complain. You must be very careful." After all, it is a given that in this school—alma mater of several NP officials and FW DeKlerk's son—a good number of students have fathers who served in the apartheid government or the South African Defense Forces. Nevertheless, Marianne remains adamant that the period be taught regardless of the consequences. "I think it's important

[1] All interviews with teachers were conducted in South Africa during the months of August and September, 2001. Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

for them to know what happened. It's necessary because they must know what happened. The ninth graders didn't know why Mandela was in jail!" But, she insists, "you mustn't give them space to argue, because they won't stop," referring to the clash between more liberal students and those whose conservative parents who have called the school to question the change in history content. Furthermore, very little of the new history texts have been written in Afrikaans. Ironically, those who stand to learn the most from a revisionist narrative of South African history are being barred from doing so as a result of publishing policies. As the school's Headmaster put it: "as it is today, there isn't a market for history textbooks in Afrikaans." Publishers are understandably hesitant to print new editions for fear that the curriculum will change dramatically in the coming years. All of this leaves teachers like Marianne in a conundrum, the only resolution to which is providing students with her own materials: newspaper articles, portions of other texts, copies of English sources and so on.

A world away in the townships surrounding Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province, the situation is not so different. The well-stocked library contains a shelf of ten different American high-school history texts brought by visitors, as well as multiple copies of Heidegger's *Language, Poetry, and Thought* donated by a local university, but not one textbook dealing with South African history. The teachers doing lesson preparation in the library laugh about the fact that their American history collection is more up-to-date than the South African one. But it is not so surprising. Here at Sithokozile High School, a 100 percent black school, history is no longer offered past Grade 9, and history and geography have been merged into a single subject as a result of curriculum reform. Teachers Ralph and Nesta complain that during the apartheid-era, history taught in schools eclipsed their own experience entirely. They dwelled on subjects such as the French Revolution, which had no immediate relation to their experience as black South Africans. For Ralph, the irony was multiplied by what he saw as "extremely clear class parallels" between revolutionary France and apartheid South Africa—parallels that were not addressed in the South African context. That said, the two are happy that they no longer have to worry about Special Branch [apartheid-era undercover secret police] spies in their classrooms, a very real fear for the dissident-minded history teacher in the apartheid days. Ralph claims that during the 1980s, "teachers were terrified," and were careful not to bring potentially "seditious" books into the classroom knowing that certain children had parents working as Special Branch informers. A

staff member was arrested and imprisoned in the mid-1980s and the former headmaster was taken in for questioning.

Down the street at the all-black Ilanga High School, history is still offered all the way through to Grade 12. Janice, a history teacher there, laments the fact that her students are enrolling in history classes in fewer and fewer numbers. "They think history has no future for them…they flock to the scientific subjects because they want to be marketable," she says. Echoing her colleagues down the road, Janice explains "History was made very foreign to us…it focused on the outside world instead of our history. It was very shallow, very superficial." Here too, teachers who refused to toe the government-approved line were pursued by the police and some were imprisoned. Janice recently received a shipment of the *Making History Standard 10/Grade 12*, published by Heinemann, with enough copies for each student in her graduating class. But the younger students in Grade 11 still have no revised materials due to a lack of funds in the government budget. Janice pieces together her own sources from newspaper clippings, journals, and other materials, including old textbooks. One of these, still on the shelves in classrooms asserts that apartheid "was not merely a blueprint for discrimination and oppression but a hyper-idealistic programme for the protection of the interests of each racial group and the fostering of goodwill and co-operation between them by the complete segregation of each group from all the others." Despite these obstacles and declining enrollments, Janice sees a change in her students' attitudes toward the subject when given a chance to learn history from a different angle: "It's very interesting to them to hear. They have lots of questions. They become so absorbed. They feel that this is theirs. They tend to own the work."

Academic Criticism

But the question remains for academics: how authentic and accurate is this new history? In 1992, leading academics, policymakers, and teachers gathered for a series of conferences throughout South Africa to discuss the details of what a new history curriculum might look like. Peter Kallaway, professor at the University of the Western Cape and the co-author of an early progressive textbook in the 1980s, told a panel in Cape Town: "[Apartheid history] was not so much deliberate distortion so much as taking for granted a particular perspective and then forcing that on to other people. We ourselves must not be reactive. We have refuted a one-sided, biased dogma, now we are faced with another set of problems and we cannot fall back on the old

formula that the trouble with school history is that it lacks objectivity. We know that the search for an objective history will never be fruitful" (History Education Group, 1993, p. 16). Similarly, John Pampallis of the University of Natal noted "It would be counterproductive...to move our syllabus content to the opposite, Afrocentric, extreme where, as happened in one or two other African countries, the history of other people and continents is completely neglected" (p. 21).

Indeed, some academic historians have become disillusioned with the transition, which they see as simply a mirror image of the old order. University of Pretoria historian Charles Van Onselen considers the textbook debate "a playground for ideologues and politicians." Van Onselen, an outspoken critic of the apartheid government's obsessive focus on Afrikaner nationalism in the history curriculum, suggests that the end result will only "serve new nationalist masters" (Interview by Author, 2001). At the elite Pretoria Afrikaans language high school, Headmaster Pier Edwards, trained as an academic historian himself, is similarly pessimistic. "We're between phases and I think it will blow over. Every new government rewrites the past. You could say it's a law of history." Edwards insists that the new history must take into account complexities rather than painting pictures solely in black vs. white/good vs. evil schemes. "It's easy to portray South African history as a struggle between good guys and bag guys...and it will last a generation," says Edwards (Interview by Author, 2001).

But University of Cape Town historian and textbook author Christopher Saunders questions the assumption that history must necessarily be contested following a political transition. Asked whether it is a divisive force, Saunders replies "It can be but it needn't be." But he is concerned that commemorations of the Anglo-Boer war centennial—depicting shared Afrikaner and Black suffering at the hands of the British—have violated the historical record in a vain attempt to promote reconciliation. Such public displays "can lead to the distortion that whites have suffered as much as blacks," according to Saunders (Interview by author, 2001).

Perhaps the most vocal academic critique of the history curriculum dilemma comes from the man with the most hope of resolving it. Minister of Education Kader Asmal, formerly a law professor at Trinity College Dublin, is adamant that "There should be no attempts, and we should guard against any attempts, to airbrush...any of the realities of our past. We cannot wish away our history like the French who refused to teach about the Commune of Paris for thirty years, or like the Japanese who until recently obliterated from memory the brutalization of Nanking and the abuse of comfort women..." (Asmal, 2001). He decries the current situation within schools

that has led to declining enrollments. Criticizing this technocratic approach to education, Asmal observes "We have allowed ourselves to be led down a cultural cul-de-sac by narrow popular perceptions of what constitutes relevant, useful or vocational education. In a single-minded career pursuit of, say, commerce or mathematics, history is muscled aside as something superfluous, a subject that has no obvious relevance to equipping children with the necessary attributes for a productive citizenship and for dealing with an increasingly complex and demanding contemporary world" (Asmal, 2001).

Conclusions

After years of vacillating, the government has adopted an aggressive policy of curricular overhaul which aims not only to insert new content into the history curriculum, but also to revive the subject as an essential component of the learning process. This battle continues to be a challenging one despite the government's wholehearted endorsement of a radically new approach that aims to revitalize the study of history. Many teachers in outlying provinces have only just begun to implement the curriculum changes mandated by Curriculum 2005 and it will be several years before the change of heart in Pretoria translates into reform in some of these poor, rural classrooms. Indeed, some of these schools no longer offer history at all.

Teachers attribute this lack of interest to the real-world demands of the new economy. In a country where unemployment hovers just above 25 percent overall and is 36 percent among black men and 52 percent among black women, getting a job is every student's primary concern. This has prompted many students to take a highly practical approach to their studies. Many history teachers lament that subject's only selling point has been as a gateway to employment in South Africa's burgeoning tourism industry. Others complain that new textbooks, presenting a new perspective have been slow in coming. The decline has been most serious in Afrikaans-language schools because no new textbooks have been published since 1994. As a result, in one town in the Orange Free State—the rural Afrikaner heartland of the country— just over 10 percent of schools offer history through the senior (matric) year. Ignorance of the past is not limited to white Afrikaner children, whose guilt-ridden families may have a vested interested in forgetting, as one might expect. History teachers at Hillview Elementary School in Pretoria were shocked to find their students, who are 70 percent black, did not know who black consciousness leader Steve Biko was.

The South African government has shown muscle in refusing to allow the first generation of free South Africans to be taught a history written by their oppressors. What two years ago appeared to be the beginning of a Freirian nightmare of "banking education" at its worst now appears to be moving in the direction of a true "pedagogy of the oppressed" for post-apartheid South Africa (Freire, 1970). But as Michel Foucault insisted "effective history" must always "...uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity" (Bouchard (ed.), 1977). In order to succeed, an "effective" South African history must grapple aggressively with the injustices of the past and seek to remedy them through the curricular resurrection of history and a rewriting of the nation's historical narrative that does justice to all the conflicting narratives that form a messy but essential mosaic of the South African past.

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